

Faculty Senate Report on Faculty Feedback to the Draft of the Five-Year Academic Action Plan submitted to the OU Board of Trustees in summer 2007

This report is in response to the request for feedback from faculty to the 5YAAP draft document. The Faculty Senate requested input from all faculty at Ohio University. As feedback came in, resolutions were drafted that reflected the thoughts expressed in those communications. The Senate held two extraordinary meetings (October 29 and November 5) to process the resolutions thus created. Eleven resolutions were passed after a second reading on the November 5 meeting. Of these resolutions, support for ten was unanimous, and support for the other was virtually unanimous with only one vote against, indicating the unity of the faculty on all these issues. Through the process, feedback from the faculty at large in support of the resolutions was remarkable.

While the eleven resolutions are very direct and give a clear indication about the principles that faculty support, a few words seem necessary to put things in perspective and bring three core ideas to the surface.

- It should be noted that a significant part of the faculty feels that this process was not handled properly. Considering that many units, including all academic colleges, drafted strategic plans as part of the Vision Ohio process, faculty find it appalling that those strategic plans were not taken into account as the 5YAAP draft was created. By focusing on the strategic plans of a few non-academic units as the main menu where objectives to support were to be chosen from, many people feel that the first draft should be entirely disposed off and the process should be started again focusing on academic priorities. This principle resonates through many of the resolutions of November 5. In particular, it is the backbone of Resolution 11, that the University's Five-Year Academic Action Plan, when presented to the Board of Trustees, include the resources required to accomplish the goals identified in the strategic plans of the Colleges, and those of the Schools and Departments of which they are composed.
- Another major consideration that permeates the discussion is a feeling that many of the objectives which are seemingly laudable are addressed in such an indirect way that they are not supportable as presented. For example, "strengthening undergraduate education" is identified with seemingly easier to measure goals such as "improving retention and graduation rates." One would certainly hope that there is a correlation between the given objective and the measurable goals but that is not necessarily the case. By confusing the laudable objectives with the measurable goals then the 5YAAP draft suggests investments in all types of peripheral expenditures instead of focusing on academic investments such as increasing faculty size that are the most likely to strengthen undergraduate education.
- A last but certainly not least concern, expressed by virtually all faculty members who replied and in particular as a consensus of the Chairs and Directors, is the uncertainty about where the funds will be coming from to support any of the initiatives highlighted in the final version of the 5YAAP.

Without a clear process to evaluate those things we are to stop doing and comparing them to those that we would like to do, this plan and the process that brought it about completely lack credibility. This is the idea behind Resolution 1.

In an ideal world, the faculty of Ohio University would like to see the 5YAAP draft thrown out and the process restarted from scratch as it needs to be completely refocused. However, in an attempt to be realistic and to be prepared and careful so that our feedback is not neglected, we came up with a mechanism to gauge support for the objectives stated in the draft of the 5YAAP and other alternative objectives. To this end, the senate conducted a “sticker poll.” We handed ten stickers and a list of the goals and objectives from the Five Year Academic Action Plan to each senator attending the extraordinary meeting of November 5, 2007. The list included space for alternative write-in objectives. Each senator was to place one or two stickers, but no more than two, in support of each of their top priorities from the thirty two objectives or their alternatives. After some discussion, three write-in goals were included: hiring more group I faculty, funding strategic plans for colleges (as per Resolution 11), and funding faculty participation in any adopted strategies (as per Resolution 10.) Discussion of write-ins prior to voting was so that people could support objectives using common terminology. In spite of that, upon counting votes we discovered other items that were added but had not been announced to everyone. Such items only received one or two votes each and, as it would be expected, that support came from the persons who introduced them.

The eleven resolutions passed by the senate and the outcome of the sticker poll are attached to this document and are meant to be integral parts of the report.

Resolutions As Passed – Nov. 5, 2007 Faculty Senate Extraordinary Meeting

Resolution One: Comprehensive Plan

Whereas the draft of the university's Five Year Academic Action Plan identifies \$37.2 million dollars in new investments over five years (\$12.3 million in base investments); and

Whereas no plan exists that identifies from where the money for these investments will come; and

Whereas it is inconceivable that this plan can be funded without significant reallocations, which means that the university will have to end or curtail current activities; and

Whereas previous annual reallocations have been steady, significant, and minimally strategic; and

Whereas it is impossible to assess priorities for new initiatives in a void, that is, without a commensurate list of activities that will be eliminated or reduced;

Be it resolved that the university create a balanced strategic plan that will propose explicit areas of reduction and elimination, alongside proposed areas of investment. Such a plan will allow faculty, staff, and students to weigh the value of new initiatives against that of plans that reduce or eliminate current activities; and

Be it further resolved that this comprehensive Academic Plan, one that respects the University's academic mission and includes both strategic investments as well as targeted reductions and reallocations, be fully discussed and reviewed by all of the senates, as well as the University Curriculum Council, Graduate Council, and other relevant university standing committees, within a time frame that allows for adequate deliberation.

Resolution Two: Reaffirm Our Mission Particularly to the Region

Whereas the Vision Ohio Five Year Academic Action Plan does not appear to address the mission of Ohio University to the region:

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that we must strive to continually improve access and excellence in higher education in our region,

Further, we must strive to employ technology and other instructional strategies to enhance program offerings by regional campuses in a manner that embraces high academic standards and enables students to complete their degrees at Ohio University.

Resolution Three: Academics and Academic Support

Whereas the university now budgets less than half of the Athens General Fund to Academic Areas*; and

Whereas a significant portion of the new investments outlined in the draft of the Five Year Academic Plan will be in Academic Support areas (Information Technology, University Advancement, Student Affairs, and Intercollegiate Athletics); and

Whereas most of the funding for the Five Year Academic Plan will likely be generated through a reallocation process;

Be it resolved that the total cost of new investments in the Academic Support areas should not exceed the total monies reallocated from Academic Support areas;

Be it further resolved that the University identify goals that would result in a positive increase in resources, measured as a percentage of the Athens General Fund, for Academic units. The academic leadership should identify metrics to ensure this occurs.

*Note: Academic Areas will be defined as the Academic Colleges and the Library.

Resolution Four: Interdisciplinary Programs and Activities

Whereas interdisciplinary initiatives and programs are essential for the future of Ohio University and Vision Ohio;

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that investments should not be limited to new initiatives and new appointments but should also foster interdisciplinary programs by making sure that existing interdisciplinary programs have adequate resources and by reforming institutional mechanisms to support interdisciplinary research and teaching.

The Faculty Senate affirms that interdisciplinary study is central to the mission of Ohio University and should be funded and supported accordingly.

Resolution Five: Hire More Faculty

Whereas Faculty Senate passed a resolution in May 2006 that called for the following:

" **Let it be resolved** that VISION OHIO be revised to formally incorporate the following written goals:

- Establish a comprehensive Group I faculty hiring program to bring Group 1 instruction on the Athens campus to the AAUP guideline and Ohio University policy of 85%.
 - Increase Group I faculty by 20-30 per year to accomplish this goal in 10 years.
 - Track percent Group I faculty instruction (Athens Campus Group I WSCH / All Athens Campus WSCH) as a metric of the success of the "Quality, Diversity, and Prominence for Faculty, Staff, and Students" goals of VISION OHIO.

These goals should be added to Vision Ohio as the first or second item under "Quality, Diversity, and Prominence for Faculty, Staff, and Students" in each section of VISION OHIO"; and

Whereas Provost Krendl reported to Senate in Fall 2006 that this was an important goal, but she wanted to determine first how much an increase in faculty compensation--a higher priority--was going to cost;

Whereas a Faculty Compensation Task Force was formed in academic year 2006-2007 and issued a report calling for an additional \$1.2 million investment in faculty compensation for each of the next five budget years; and

Whereas this amount is part of the FY08 budget and is included in the five-year financial planning being undertaken by Budget Planning Council; and

Whereas one could justifiably conclude that the university has now determined the cost of improving faculty compensation; and

Whereas most of the academic objectives articulated in the Draft Five Year Academic Action Plan can most effectively be accomplished through the commitment of more faculty time; and

Whereas there is at present no explicit goal to hire significant numbers of additional faculty in the draft of the Plan

Be it resolved that the Draft Five Year Academic Plan include recommendations for the hiring of new faculty in line with the resolution passed by Senate in May 2006.

Resolution Six: A Quality Learning Environment for All

Whereas enhancing service and accessibility to quality learning environment should be our highest priority for all students, not just intercollegiate athletes, and

Whereas university resources and facilities should benefit all students and not just a few of them, and

Whereas goals or strategies consisting of hiring coaches or winning sporting trophies are not compatible with an academic strategic plan, and

Whereas the success rate of Ohio University student athletes ranks favorably compared with that of its peers in the Mid-American Conference and compares favorably with that of the Ohio University student body,

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that there should not be funds in the Five Year Academic Plan earmarked exclusively for improving the academic success of Intercollegiate Athletes; any such funds and the services they support must be made available to all students.

Resolution Seven: Marketing and Communications

Whereas it is welcome that Marketing and Communications has begun to actively assist with the recruitment of students as evidenced by the Promise campaign;

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that investments in Marketing and Communications be benchmarked in order to measure improvements in the quality of recruited students and the educational experience of students at Ohio University.

Resolution Eight: University Advancement

Whereas it is an excellent objective to improve University Advancement efforts at Ohio University;

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that these efforts should have clear benchmarks and accountability, and should not be funded by the General Fund.

Resolution Nine: Student Information System

Whereas a fully-supported, integrated Student Information System (SIS) is critical to the academic enterprise;

It is the sense of the Faculty Senate that the new SIS should not be in competition for funds identified in the 5-year Academic Plan.

Resolution Ten: Faculty Time is a Resource

Whereas many of the initiatives in the Draft Five-Year Academic Plan will require greater commitments of time on the part of faculty; and

Whereas faculty time is a resource that costs the university money, but such time has not been budgeted in the plan; and

Whereas this greater investment in time will have to be accomplished either through hiring more faculty or reducing activities (teaching, research, and service) on which faculty currently spend their time; and

Whereas such increases in faculty workload most often come at the expense of research;

Be it resolved that the plan be revised to reflect and value the opportunity costs of faculty time. Any objective in the Five-Year Plan that implies an increased expectation, or reallocation, of faculty effort must be matched with specifically identified budgeted resources.

Resolution Eleven: Sense of the Senate Resolution Regarding Inclusion of Resources Identified in Strategic Plans of Academic Units in the Five-Year Academic Action Plan

Whereas the University's Five-Year Academic Action Plan purports to be an academic plan, and

Whereas the academic units are central to achieving the goals of any academic plan, and

Whereas Colleges, through their Schools and Departments, developed strategic plans detailing their goals and objectives within the framework of Vision Ohio, and

Whereas the current draft of the University's Five-Year Academic Action Plan does not mention specifically the Colleges' plans, nor include resources directed specifically toward their achievement;

Be it resolved that the University's Five-Year Academic Action Plan, when presented to the Board of Trustees, include the resources required to accomplish the goals identified in the strategic plans of the Colleges, and the Schools and Departments of which they are composed.

REPORT ON THE STICKER POLL
Gauging faculty support for objectives in the 5YAAP draft and for
alternative write-in objectives.

It should be pointed out that faculty support for those objectives from the 5YAAP draft that did receive votes is to be interpreted under the light of the eleven resolutions passed. For example, one of the senators voting for V.5.(Increase Annual Philanthropic Support from \$15M to \$30M) annotated the ballot to emphasize that development staff must earn their own salaries and not be supported by the General Fund.

Worthy of mention is also the fact that supporting an objective does not necessarily mean supporting the goals attached to that objective by the 5YAAP draft. For example, there is ample support among faculty for the resolution passed by Graduate Student senate putting other forms of support for graduate students such as reduced fees and insurance benefits over the stated 5YAAP draft goal of creating a graduate college. Support of objective II.1 is consequently an example of the principle stated in this paragraph.

What follows is a summary of the outcomes of the sticker poll:

- The most popular objective was a write-in: Hiring More Group I faculty, with 58 Votes.
- Increasing Faculty Compensation (objective VI.3) was the second most popular objective; it obtained 48 votes.
- The third item was enhancing support for Graduate and Professional Students (Objective II.1). It received 34 Votes.
- Another write-in, funding Resolution 11 received 30 Votes.
- The next four objectives are virtually tied. Two of them received 23 votes each and the other two received 24 votes each. These objectives are
 - I.1 Improving the Retention Rate, Engagement, and Graduation Rate of Undergraduate Students,
 - I.3. Enhancing Interdisciplinary Programs
 - III.1 Improving Faculty, Staff, and Student Quality and Diversity, and
 - V.8 Reducing Support Expenditures Relative to Academic Expenditures.
- The objectives receiving between 10 and 13 votes each are:
 - V.1. 1. Provide a Dependable and Secure Network and Systems Infrastructure
 - VI.4. Increase Internal and External Research Funding including OUCOM
 - Write-in: Fund Faculty Time Investments (as per Resolution 10)
- Objectives receiving 5-9 votes each:
 - I.2. Implement General Education Assessment
 - II.2. Increase Diversity of Faculty and Staff
 - IV.1 Enhance Positive Student Engagement in Campus and Community Life
 - IV.3 Enhance Residential Students' Out-of-Class Experience
 - IV.6. Instill Among Students a Sense of Personal and Civic Responsibility
 - V.4. Utilize Technology to Enhance the Academic Mission of Instruction, Research, and Service
 - V.5. Increase Annual Philanthropic Support from \$15M to \$30M
 - V.7. Improve Balance Sheet Strength
 - VI.1. Invest in Targeted Undergraduate Programs
 - VI. 2. Increase Strategic Investment in Targeted Graduate and Professional Programs

- Objectives receiving 1-4 votes each:
 - IV.2. Improve the Health and Safety of Students
 - IV.4 Foster Leadership Development of Students
 - IV.5 Enhance the Integration of Student Affairs and Academic Units
 - V.3. Create and Maintain a Customer-Focused IT Service
 - V.9. Lower Risk and Financial Liability Exposure
 - VI.5. Strengthen Student Recruitment Marketing
 - VI.6. Implement Paid Media Strategies to Build the Brand in Core Markets
 - VI. 9. Make Better Use of Earned Media Coverage as a Brand-Building Tool
 - Write-in: Increase Fund Intramural and Faculty Creative Activities
 - Write-in: Restore Funds to Academic Units that have endured budget cuts for the last eight years, at least to those departments that still exist.
 - Write-in: Increased University-wide compensation for Group II faculty-more proportional to the WSCH that they teach.
 - Write-in: Fund Resolution 2

- The following objectives from the 5YAAP draft received no votes:
 - III.3. Increase Diversity of Graduate Students
 - IV.7. Lift our Athletic Programs to New Heights of Excellence
 - V.2. Ensure Effective Information Technology Security Practices
 - V.6. Campaign Preparation and Silent Phase Kick-Off
 - VI.7. Use Alumni Volunteers to Help Tell the OHIO Story
 - VI.8. Make Better Use of the Web as a Brand-Building Tool